

REGION IX, MAINLAND REGIONAL RESPONSE TEAM (MRRT)

Co-Chaired at the regional and national levels by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Coast Guard

Minutes of meeting Sept. 30 and Oct. 1, 1998, at Reno Hilton Hotel, Reno, Nevada

I. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order Wednesday, Sept. 30, 1998, at 1:40 p.m. by MRRT Co-Chair Kathleen G. Shimmin, USEPA, and USCG LT Robert Sánchez, representing Captain Ed Page, MRRT Co-Chair. Attendees and observers were welcomed. Ms. Shimmin facilitated self-introductions by each attendee.

II. Program

1. Subject: New Directions

Speaker: Ms. Kathleen G. Shimmin, MRRT Co-Chair

Summary: Ms. Shimmin announced she was taking a new assignment in Hawaii and that Michael Feeley would be the new EPA RRT Co-Chair.

2. Subject: Welcome to Nevada; State of the State Update

Speaker: Jim Goodfellow, Div. of Emergency Management (DEM)

Summary: Mr. Goodfellow welcomed all to Nevada. He said there is a new direction within State government to provide better service to the people. This involves better planning and coordination with the RRT and an effort to bring the responsibilities of State agencies into closer accord with State law.

3. Subject: National Response Team (NRT)

Speaker: John Gustafson, Executive Director, NRT

Summary: Mr. Gustafson gave a brief slide presentation on the NRT. Copies of the slides are available on the NRT website; www.nrt.org. He announced the next NRT/RRT Co-Chairs meeting Feb. 2-4, 1999, in Las Vegas, Nevada.

4. Subject: OPA 90, Area Contingency Planning for Inland Areas

Speaker: Pete Bontadelli, Administrator, California Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR)

Summary: Based upon his experience with a recent Spills of National Significance (SONS) exercise, the FOG manual is in need of revision. Robert Floerke, Cal OSPR, is heading the project. A major issue is area planning. In Mr. Bontadelli's view, it falls within the responsibility of the RRT which has the right players. But responders must become more involved in the process.

Action Item: Ms. Shimmin proposed a subcommittee composed of: Don Lollock/OSPR, Pat Port/Interior, Bobbi Baca/U.S. Forest Service, Cathi Slaminski/California OES, Dan Roe/Arizona SERC, Dale Anderson/Arizona DEQ, Susan Moore/Nevada DEM, NOAA/SSC, U.S. Coast Guard, and possibly Health and Human Service, and FEMA. The group is to report back at the next Mainland RRT meeting.

5. Subject: Pacific Strike Team (PST) introduction

Speaker: Cdr. Paul Jewell, Commander/PST

Summary: Cdr. Jewell gave a brief introduction to the Pacific Strike Team and the resources it can bring to bear in oil or hazardous materials spills.

MEETING ADJOURNED- end of day one; Special technical presentations followed:

1. Mike Watson of Global Ecology presented a creative energy concept to use waste products (garbage, animal waste) to produce useful products so that the waste becomes an economic benefit instead of an expense.

2. James Buckley of AETI described a process whereby oxygen in vitro is used to reduce organic contaminants (necient oxygen by electrolysis). The system can remove MTBE and related compounds relatively inexpensively.

3. Paul Warsitz of Warsitz Enterprises, Inc. presented hydrogen fuel cells and solar power for use in environmental projects where a clean, stable source of power may be needed.

4. Nancy Forrester of Forrestal Environmental presented a product called "Sheen Solutions" that is a growth enhancer for indigenous bacteria, greatly shortening the time span for waste products (oil, sewage, and organic garbage) to be broken down into fundamental components. The material is non-toxic and the byproducts are generally non-toxic.

PRESENTATIONS CONCLUDED

Day Two: Oct. 1, 1998

Mainland RRT meeting reconvened at 9 a.m.

5. Subject: U.S. Coast Guard report

Speaker: LT Robert Sánchez, acting for Captain Page, Co-Chair

Summary: LT Sánchez introduced and described the new Coast Guard web site: www.uscg.mil/pacarea/pm -- that has links to many other sites related to planning and response.

Action Item: Bob Brown, GSA, requested that Marine Safety Office (MSO) Pol-Reps be put on-line.

Action Item: Bruce Hillard, NOAA, requested a link to the NOAA hazmat site.

Action Item: Ms. Bobbi Baca, U.S. Forest Service, requested agenda time at the next meeting to discuss areas of concern that seem not to be covered.

There was a question from the floor: "How does response work?" Brad Shipley, a Region IX U.S. EPA on-scene coordinator (OSC), responded at length on the process.

A wide-ranging discussion on access to the Pollution Fund ensued, the central issue being how to provide reimbursement to the local level, i.e. the local fire department.

Action Item: For the next meeting, have Terry Brubaker, U.S. EPA Region IX lead OSC, discuss funding reimbursement for responders; Cathi Slaminski, California OES, talk about how the state has addressed the problem, and possibly have someone from NPFC come out to address the group.

6. Introduction to NCP, RRT, Emergency Support Function 10, Federal

Radiological Emergency Response Plan (FRERP), and Area Planning.

Speaker: Kathleen G. Shimmin, U.S. EPA RRT Co-Chair

Summary: Ms. Shimmin gave several handouts to the group and then walked the group through the provisions of 40CFR part 300.115 Regional Response Teams. This was followed by a description of the process of and about the FRP and ESF 10. A question and answer session followed.

7. Subject: Nevada SERC report

Speaker: Ms. Elizabeth Ashby, Nevada SERC

Summary: Ms. Ashby briefly reviewed SERC activities and noted that major support for the SERC was from the Fire Marshal's office, which is also the data repository for SERC records.

8. Subject: Area Planning

Speaker: Brad Shipley, U.S. EPA OSC

Summary: OSC Shipley described the planning process and noted that certain environmentally sensitive areas were targeted with sub-area plans tailored to the specific needs of those areas.

Steve Jordan, ERT Consulting in Carson City, described planning considerations and noted that the RRT could facilitate interstate agreements and responses, and provide a forum for problems and issues to be raised and resolved. He observed that the Highway Patrol almost always is first responder and wondered what "tools" could be given those first responders to better prepare them for the variety of incidents they might face. A discussion followed.

Don Lollock, California OSPR, stated that California wanted to be involved in the planning process.

Steve Jordan added that it is very important to have people involved in the process at a level that can commit state resources and/or sign agreements.

Dan Roe, Arizona SERC, suggested the Nevada-California Truckee River Plan might be a good first project for an interstate cooperative planning venture.

Ms. Shimmin noted that CFR 300.210 describes what must be in an area plan.

9. Subject: NOAA brochures and web addresses

Speaker: Cdr. Bruce Hillard, NOAA

Summary: Cdr. Hillard presented 15 brochures from another region that could be adapted to Region IX use in answering many fundamental questions about response and the RRT.

Action Item: A conference call on Oct. 7, 1998, involving Nevada, Arizona, California, Dept. of the Interior and U.S. EPA, will focus on appropriate changes to the brochures.

Action Item: A conference call is scheduled Oct. 15, 1998, to discuss and take action on the FY99 Workplan.

Cdr. Hillard's E-mail address: Hillard@hazmat.noaa.gov

Port information: www.sfmex.org

10. Subject: Minerals Management Service update

Speaker: Craig Ogawa, Minerals Management Service (MMS)

Summary: During the last quarter there were 14 unannounced oil spill exercises. An updated memorandum of understanding (MOU) between MMS and the U.S. Coast Guard has been signed. An In-Situ Burn workshop is going to be held in New Orleans, LA on Nov. 2-4, 1998. The Oil Spill Research Program directed by Joe Mullen is working on:

- * Testing crude oils, to develop profiles;
- * Fireproof booms;
- * Response training

Don Lollock added that OSPR is working with MMS on:

- * Sea bird migration patterns;
- * Dispersant efficiency studies;
- * Bioremediation in extreme climates

11. Subject: Nevada Div. of Emergency Management (DEM) update

Speaker: Susan Moore, DEM

Summary: Major revisions of the Nevada Plan will mirror the Federal Response Plan. The research also is causing a major shift in the responsibilities of some Nevada agencies because, during the review of state statutes, mismatches were discovered between what some agencies were supposed to do and what the agencies were actually doing.

The revised plan should be done by April 1999. The ESF 10 portion should be done by the end of 1998. The revised statute is #459 and can be viewed on the Nevada State Web Site: www.state.nv.us

New division of responsibilities:

- * Radiological & hazmat-- Dept. of Human Resources (Except Nevada Test Site)
- * Railroads and pipelines-- Public Utilities Commission
- * Public contact (receives and directs calls)-- Nevada DEM

12. Subject: California Office of Emergency Services (OES) update

Speaker: Cathi Slaminski

Summary: The OES State Hazmat Emergency Plan of 1991 is being revised. Target date is January 1999. The revised plan will include appropriate federal laws and regulations, and internet site references. The plan should be available on the state internet site. The old plan was only hazardous materials. The new plan, Ms. Slaminski stated, will have annexes addressing terrorism, oil spills, radiological events and mutual aid.

Regarding area contingency planning, Ms. Slaminski would like to see more involvement of regional folks such as Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC) and other local agencies.

California is moving toward a "One Plan" concept for industry and business that would be a core plan with appropriate annexes.

13. Subject: California Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) report

Speaker: Don Lollock, OSPR

Summary: There will be an oil spill drill in 1999, with details to follow. OSPR has been in a workshop with NOAA to address river spills, such as the Columbia River. Mr. Lollock added that he was pleasantly surprised at the level of readiness of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to respond to spills in a river environment, including plans and equipment.

The reorganization of OSPR will be completed by Feb. 6, 1999.

14. Subject: Marine Spills Response Corporation (MSRC) update

Speaker: Ike Ikerd, MSRC

Summary: Mr. Ikerd presented a brief history and overview of the MSRC. He said that in the current reorganization, MSRC is being trimmed down, based upon actual experience gathered over the years, to a leaner organization that is better focused on serving its customers, members of the Marine Preservation Association.

The new MSRC will now provide equipment to foreign locations and hands-on training for responders. He gave an open invitation to RRT members to contact his office for training schedules and more information on the program.

15. Subject: Counterterrorism activity, FBI report

Speaker: John Sylvester, FBI

Summary: Mr. Sylvester talked briefly about current FBI activities that fall into its counterterrorism mandate.

- * Militia groups are growing rapidly in number;

- * A fair number of religious groups also are clustered around the Y2K event. The groups splinter about what they see as the major event happening in the year 2000: Armageddon, second coming, end of the world, end of government, etc.

- * International groups: threats against nuclear facilities and U.S. citizens, and militants on "alpha list," etc.

16. Subject: Arizona report and update

Speaker: Dan Roe, Arizona State Emergency Response Commission (SERC)

Summary: Mr. Roe thanked Kathleen for her leadership and effort in helping build and maintain an effective RRT the past 12 years. He said that he had already received a lot of good ideas from the meeting.

He announced that the next MRRT meeting, to be hosted by Arizona, would be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Phoenix May 20, 1999. He asked for ideas for the agenda and gave his E-mail address: DanRoe@AOL.com and the Arizona web site: www.az.us.es Mr. Roe noted that the BOLDER program is now out of Beta testing.

Action Item: Mr. Roe asked for an official list of RRT members.

Dale Anderson commented that Arizona Customs does not have a health and safety plan as required by OSHA.

Action Item: Ms. Shimmin and Captain Page to write letter regarding Customs.

John Gustafson, NRT, observed that RRT members who have Border responsibilities perhaps should have official passports instead of personal passports.

Mr. Roe reported a July 1, 1998, release of nitric acid. The spill was about 4,500 gallons and one mile long. He noted that the Attorney General, State of Arizona, has become involved in the aftermath of this incident.

17. Arizona Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ) report

Speaker: Dale Anderson

Summary: There is a problem with human sewage in the Colorado River. The source is identified as a sewage treatment plant. Mr. Anderson said that there is a pressing need to improve plans for prevention and response along the Colorado River. The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) is short on resources and know-how for on-water spills (marina spills), it was indicated. BOR may be a source of volunteers to help with the Lower Colorado Sub-area Plan.

In the ensuing discussion, it was suggested that during the next RRT meeting in Arizona the RRT take a field trip to the Sedona area and/or the Tombstone area. Mr. Roe stated that he could arrange for Bureau of Corrections busses.

18. Nevada Division of Emergency Management (DEM) report

Speaker: Jim Goodfellow, DEM

Mr. Goodfellow stated he would like to see an effort to resolve differences between federal authorities and State of Nevada authorities. He suggested a working group be put together to unearth differences and resolve them before the next disaster. He commented that he liked the concept of California's Quick Approval process.

19. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) report

Speaker: Sue Skinner, BLM

Summary: Ms. Skinner reported on the failure of a 2-million gallon waste holding tank for a 5,000 head dairy farm, causing an 18-mile long spill of bovine waste along the California border.

She complained that "inconsistent language," such as the different word usage between the Clean Water Act and state statutes, can create a problem for her office in trying to apply enforcement uniformly.

Another event, Ms. Skinner added, was the GeoBrome problem. At an abandoned mining site, a container of bromic acid was found. Bromic acid (pH=prox O) is unstable and difficult to keep in a container. Some mines are going broke and employees are selling equipment to get paychecks. Unfortunately, some of the stuff being removed is essential, such as operating pumps.

She invited RRT members to visit the BLM web site for more detailed information about current activities.

20. Subject: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service activities

Speaker: Stan Wiemeyer, Nevada office

Summary: Mr. Wiemeyer reported on two concerns of the Nevada office; hormone disruption of fish due to percolation from a facility into Lake Mead, and the Carson River Mercury Site. He said the Leviathan has a sampling effort underway to determine the effect on fish, wildlife and the environment from current and past releases.

21. Question and answer period

MEETING ADJOURNED

MRRT minutes Don Anthony 11/98; revised Al Fischer 3/99; received by U.S. Coast Guard for posting to website on 15 April 1999.